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ABSTRACT

Case-based teaching in some fields offers competition experiences as prestigious professional benchmarks and development experiences in professional preparation. Case-based team competition in teacher education can offer possibilities for preservice professional growth and development. Case-based teaching also has a natural fit with constructivist principles of teaching educational psychology. The Commonwealth Center Invitational Team Case Competition in May 1993 provided opportunities for educational psychology students to problem solve cooperatively across several performance dimensions. A case competition on the Internet will expand the opportunities for problem-solving and mentoring. Case competition has changed the structure, expectations, and assignments of the educational psychology classes. Preservice teachers have been led to think of themselves as more capable as they examine classroom dilemmas. Two figures present supporting information. (Contains 43 references.) (SLD)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Case Competition as a Catalyst to Restructure the Teaching and Learning of Educational Psychology

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Case Competition as a Catalyst to Restructure the Teaching and Learning of Educational Psychology

Competition is characterized as a win-lose goal structure and motivation strategy in educational psychology (Eggen & Kauchek, 1994; Woolfolk, 1995). With the current emphasis on cooperation and collaboration in teacher preparation pedagogy and philosophy, to the exclusion of competition, the pendulum may have again swung too far and something vital may be lost in the teaching and learning process. In teaching educational psychology we need to look at both the positive and negative aspects of collaboration, cooperation and competition strategies and their appropriate purposes and uses.

Case-based teaching in other fields, such as business and law, offer competition experiences as prestigious professional bench marks and development experiences in professional preparation. We seem reluctant in teacher preparation to engage in interactive exchanges which illuminate and acknowledge both our excellence and our failure in an open forum, such as case competition. This ultimately may be a professional blunder which encourages mediocrity and insular viewpoints among faculty and students alike. Successful professionals seek opportunities to measure, compare, and refine their ideas against "the best", and to grow from those experiences.

Team competition can offer exciting possibilities for preservice professional growth and development as well as extending the message that excellence in teacher preparation is valued, difficult, and worth obtaining. However, the success or failure of any interactive collaborative venture relies on the skill of team to work together, and the opportunities for the educational psychologist to act as a role model, mentor, and coach. This will require that an infusion of case study pedagogy to restructure traditional test and lecture courses into uncertainties of seeking solutions to messy "real" teaching dilemmas, interactive and collaborative problem-solving, and using the text as a reference manual of possibilities rather than offering the definitive answer or solution to a particular problem.

Case-based Teaching and Educational Psychology

Case-based teaching becoming increasingly popular pedagogy in teacher preparation (Sudzina & Kilbane, 1994; Wassermann, 1993, White & McNergney, 1991). The case for the applications of case studies to teacher preparation has been eloquently stated (Doyle, 1990; Harrington, 1990-1; Merseth, 1991; Shulman, 1992, Sykes & Bird, 1992). The effectiveness of the case method relies on: (1) the quality of the case for generating student interest and presenting the issues, and, (2) the skill of the instructor to facilitating and debriefing class discussion (Wassermann, 1994). Recent research (Allen, 1994) suggests that the amount of content learned is not diminished through the case study method. Case based teaching and discussion can lead to clearer, more elaborate understandings of issues by beginning teachers (Levin, 1993).

Case-based teaching a natural "fit" with constructivist principles of teaching educational psychology. This perspective views knowledge and learning as interactive, socially constructed, collaborative, and problem-related (Woolfolk, 1995). The role of the instructor is that of a facilitator and guide. Difficulties with this approach include having a clear goal, facilitating discussion, and the importance of the teacher to guide, intervene, and direct student learning in this "student-centered" approach (Eggen & Kauchek, 1994).

Educational psychology is an appropriate "foundation" content area for the application of theory, research, and practice to "real" teaching dilemmas. Cases provide a mechanism for shared thinking and knowledge construction as well as a way to individualize instruction in educational psychology (Peterson, Clark, Dickson, 1989). Case study texts also key into the theory and research traditionally covered in educational psychology courses (Greenwood & Parkay, 1989; Kauffman, Mostert, Nuttycombe, Trent & Hallahan, 1993) and are included with some educational psychology texts (Eggen & Kauchek, 1994; Woolfolk, 1995).

Case-based teaching in educational psychology has also been an area for pedagogical inquiry and action research (Sudzina, 1991; Sudzina, 1993b; Sudzina & Kilbane, 1992; Sudzina, Kowalski & Weaver, 1994).

Case Competition Consequences

Question: How do we know that case-based teaching and case competition make a difference in teacher preparation?

Answer: The proof of the pudding lies in what people do when they return to their home institutions. (McNergney, 1992)

The Commonwealth Center Invitational Team Case Competition was held at the University of Virginia in May, 1993. Participating in this event proved to be the start of a series of subsequent case competition activities for this author and her students. Although cases activities were already integrated in educational psychology courses (Sudzina & Kilbane, 1993), preparing for the competition proved to be an entirely different level of teaching and learning, qualitatively and quantitavely (Sudzina, 1993c; Sudzina, 1994c). In essence, the educational psychologist assumed the role of mentor and coach in preparing a preservice team to cooperatively problem-solve case dilemmas across several dimensions: writing, research, presentation, listening, analysis and collaboration.

Although this preservice team did not win the competition, they came away with a sense of accomplishment and an ever stronger commitment to teaching excellence. They had the opportunity to observe others as professionals and role models and gained a heightened sense of what was possible and what they wanted to achieve. These preservice teachers not only wrote about the case competition (Sudzina & Kilbane, 1994) and presented a panel about their experiences at a national conference (Sudzina, Ahlgren, Damon, Miller & Young, 1993), but they also hosted a regional case competition the next year (Sudzina, 1994a).

As a result of these activities,UD preservice teachers were invited to participate in a "first ever" virtual case competition on the internet, in which they tied for first place (Sudzina, 1994d), and in another virtual case competition the next year conducted over the World Wide Web. In the Fall of 1995, one section of undergraduate educational psychology will include internet case discussions

with other four other teacher preparation institutions and a virtual case competition as part of the course curriculum. (See Figure 1)

Preservice teachers now seek out competition experiences. They see it as an opportunity to test what they know against an "ideal" solution and to be involved in an intense mentoring experience - to test the very best that they have to offer. Another benefit is the opportunity to work with other like-minded preservice teachers. Not surprisingly, teams develop lasting relationships with each other and their mentor.

Case Competition as Catalyst to Restructure Teaching

As a result of the preparation and participation in case competitions, the structure, expectations, and assignments in the author's educational psychology classes have changed dramatically (See Table 1). Teaching and learning has moved from a teacher-directed orientation relying heavily on lecture, discussion and testing to a more innovative open-ended constructivistic format.

Prior to the national case competition, case use was primarily teacher selected and directed and relied on individual responses to case questions. After the first competition, innovative presentation strategies were encouraged, team analyses and presentations became the norm, and student selected cases and topics became the focus of case discussions.

After the first virtual case competition, technology was introduced into the curriculum by way of accessing cases over the internet. After the second case competition, students obtained e-mail addresses, read a multimedia case on netscape, posted their responses to a restricted news group, and critiqued each others' answers. Five students also elected to participate in a virtual case competition in addition to class assignments.

As a result of case activities, the majority of preservice teachers see themselves as more capable and able to step back and objectively look at classroom dilemmas. Most thrive on the innovative and creative case presentations. However, a small majority have mixed emotions. Having successfully negotiated a traditional lecture and testing educational system,

Figure 1

CASE COMPETITION AS A CATALYST TO RESTRUCTURE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

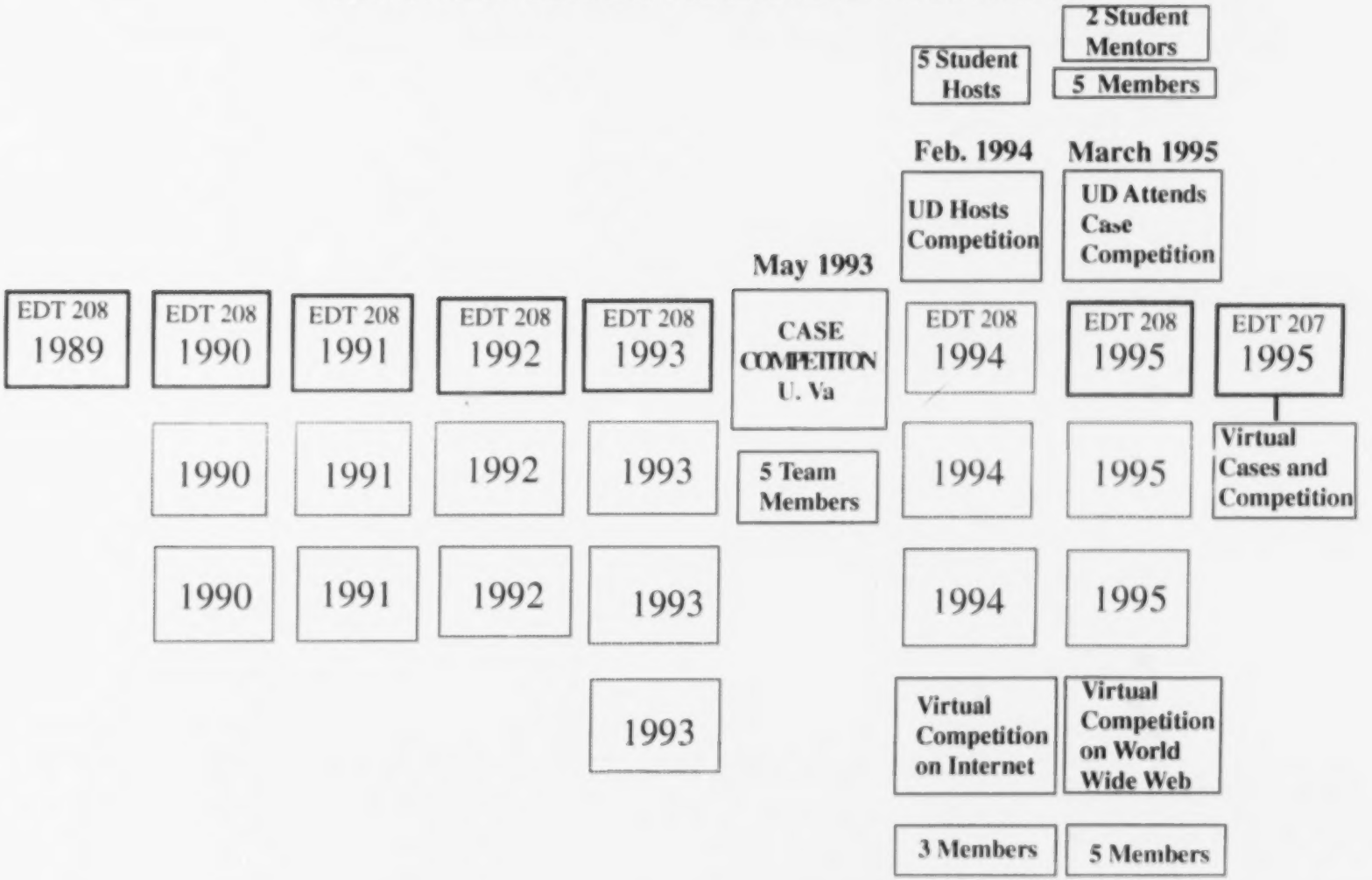


TABLE 1
THE IMPACT OF COMPETITION EXPERIENCES
ON TEACHING AND LEARNING EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

WINTER 1989-1993	MAY 1993	WINTER 1994	MAY 1994
Edt 208: Ed. Psychology	Case Competition	Edt 208: Ed. Psychology	Virtual Case Competition
- Texts/articles as primary content	- Texts/articles	- Texts/articles, ERIC as reference	- Texts/articles, ERIC as reference
- ERIC searches	- ERIC searches	- Provocateur questions	- 5 part analysis
- Respond to questions in case text	- Writing skills	- Team presentations	- Research and writing skills
- Teacher/student selected cases	- Analyze videotape	- 5 part analysis	- Case from internet
- Critique case texts	- Presentation skills	- Research,writing, and presentation skills	- Independence and autonomy
- Peer review	- Listening skills	- Student selected cases and topics	- Word processing skills/saving to ASCII
- Individual/group presentations	- Research skills	- Innovative formats	- Internet capability
- Write cases from field experiences	- Areas of expertise	- Collaborative and cooperative strategies	- E-mail address
	- Proposal writing	- Applications of theory/practice	- Instructor as mentor
	- Survey of case use		
	- 5 part analysis		
	- Audiotape analysis		
	- Team building/ collaboration		

WINTER 1995	APRIL 1995	FALL 1995
Edt 208: Ed. Psychology	Virtual Case Competition	EDT 207: Ed. Psychology
- Texts/articles, ERIC as reference	- Accessing the WWW through Netscape	- Texts/articles as primary content
- 5 part analysis	- Posting color photos & team information to the WWW site	- ERIC/literature searches on WWW
- Research, writing & presentation skills	- Downloading/ printing case dilemma	- Accessing multimedia cases on the WWW
- Multimedia cases from World Wide Web-	- Writing, saving and sending text	- WWW case discussions w/ 5 other institutions
- Video and research follow-up activities	- 5 part analysis	- 5 part analysis
- E-mail address	- Research and writing	- Multimedia virtual case competition
- Electronic news group	- E-mail address	- E-mail address
- Team presentations	- Independence and autonomy	- Posting assignments to news group
- Student selected cases and topics	- Instructor as mentor	- Constructivist approach to teaching
- Constructivist approach to teaching		

they are reluctant to leave a safe and known system to assume more autonomy and venture into the "unknown" of case dilemmas.

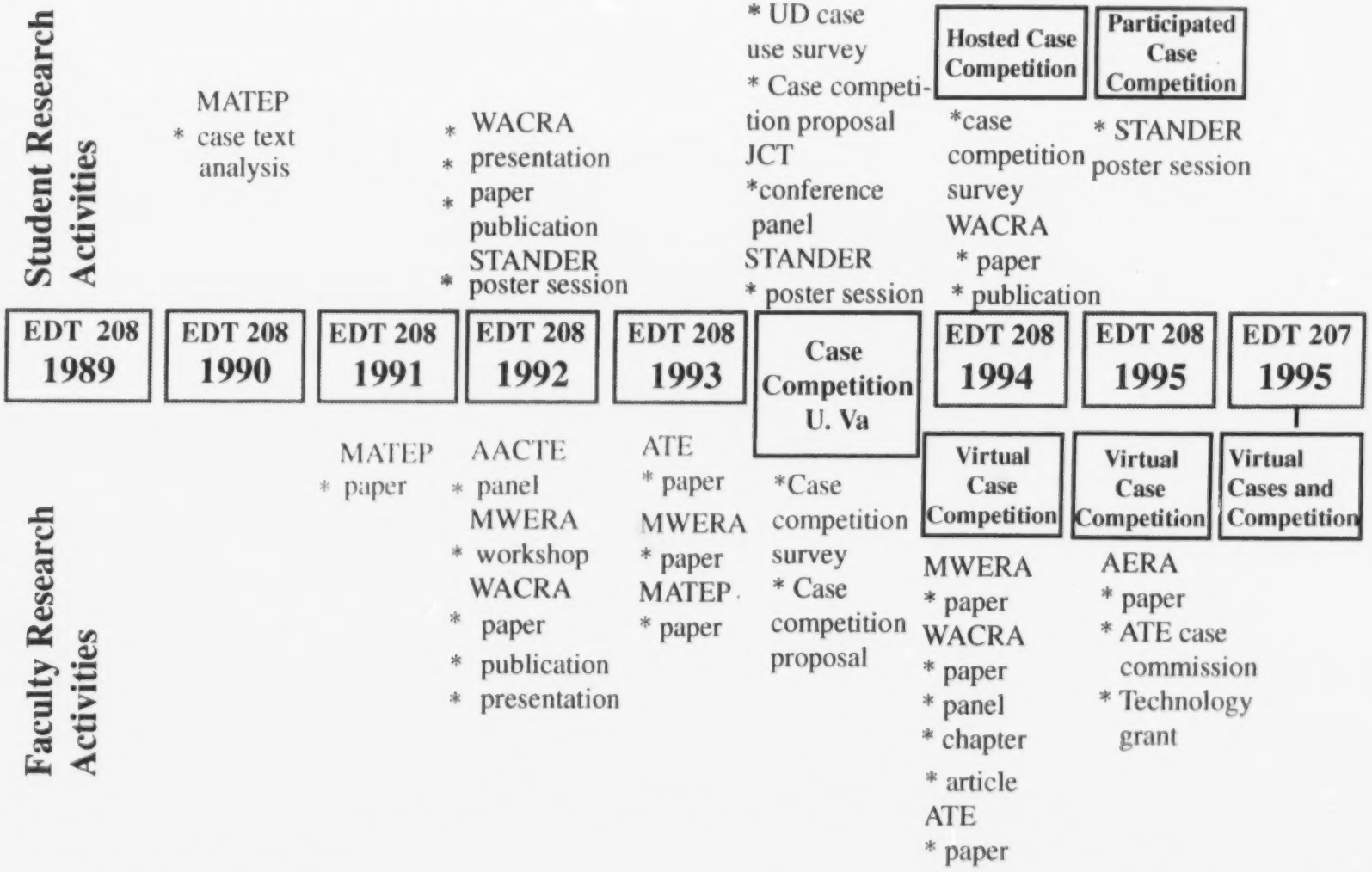
The realization that there are several appropriate responses to a case dilemma depending on personality, history, context, and situation can be exhilarating - and frustrating. Levels and depth of content and issues usually not explored in a survey courses find their way into case discussions. The role of the instructor is challenging as no two classes, or individuals see a case in the same way. Keeping the class on task with a clear goals is often difficult and not every case discussion is a gem. However, the opportunities to capitalize on student interest and motivation and bring a wealth of resources to bear in problem-solving can be enlightening and invigorating for both faculty and student.

Enhancing Teaching and Research

An unexpected outcome of case-based teaching and case competition experiences were the opportunities for faculty and students alike to reflect on their experiences and to conduct action research (See Figure 2). Prior to the case competition in 1993, only a handful of students were involved in research activities. The team of five students that participated in the first competition all became involved in later research and/or mentoring activities and four of the five have won preservice research awards. Participants from one case competition mentor students participating in another. In the spring of 1995, ten students were involved in case competitions.

Analyzing videotapes from the competitions becomes another vehicle for professional development and reflection as do competition case surveys (Sudzina, 1993a). Teaching and learning activities continue beyond the course and classroom as a natural outgrowth of the intense relationships among team members, their faculty mentor, and case competition experiences. It appears that the competition aspect acts as a catalyst for preservice teachers to cooperate and collaborate in order to successfully compete (McNergney, Herbert & Ford, 1994). Competition seen in this light appears to be a win-win proposition.

Figure 2 CASE STUDY APPLICATIONS AND COMPETITION AS A CATALYST TO ENHANCE TEACHING AND RESEARCH



Summary and Conclusions

Business, law, medicine all use cases in their professional preparation. Collaborative case competition can be viewed as a positive professional growth experience and an opportunity to excel in applying theory to practice in "safe" settings. Educational psychology, by the very nature of its content, offers opportunities for students to practice what they are learning through case-based teaching experiences. Competition experiences are an enhancement to preparation as they offer opportunities that are rarely available in the traditional undergraduate curriculum for extended networking, research, writing, problem-solving, presentation and debate skills. The process can encourage increased preservice collaboration, professionalism, confidence and competence, rather than discourage high standards, coping skills and professional development.

In today's educational climate there are very few "pat" answers to dilemmas as case-based teaching and case competition make abundantly clear: There are a variety of possible solutions to any dilemma and preservice teachers need to be prepared to select the among them, as well as acknowledge the reasons for and consequences of their actions. Instructing preservice teachers to guard against unhealthy levels of individual competition in their classrooms is no guarantee that they will be prepared to deal positively, fairly, and collaboratively, with differences of opinion among colleagues and different constituencies in education: principals, staff, parents, peers, pupils.

Case-based teaching strategies and competitions offer a "reality check" to difficult teaching dilemmas by providing preservice teachers with opportunities to view situations from a variety of viewpoints and collaboratively seek solutions that are professionally, ethically, and pedagogically sound.

As preservice teachers assume more responsibility for their own learning, the educational psychologist role shifts to that of a mentor and coach rather than remaining center stage. This shift , predictably, affects educational psychology teaching and learning expectations as professors strive to reform and revitalize teacher preparation by incorporating positive aspects of case-based and team competition strategies in their curriculum. This constructivist approach also affects teaching, research, and professional activities.

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